

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3831

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 LISBON 4742

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, PO

SUBJ: POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

REF: LISBON 4536 091600Z AUG 75 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT COSTA GOMES, WHO IS CONTINUING HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH PARTY LEADERS, MET WITH MES AND PPD REPRESENTATIVES ON AUGUST 19. BRIG. CORVACHO IS OUT AS REGIONAL MILITARY COMMANDER FOR THE NORTH. CITING THE THREAT OF "REACTIONARY PROVOCATIONS," THE PCP CANCELLED ITS RALLY IN OPORTO ONLY HOURS BEFORE IT WAS SCHEDULED TO BEING ON AUGUST 19. THE AZORES MILITARY GOVERNOR ORDERED SEVERAL COMMUNIST LEADERS FLOWN TO LISBON FOLLOWING MORE VIOLENCE AGAINST THE LEFT IN PONTA DELGADA ON AUGUST 19. INTERSINDICAL STRIKE IN LISBON AND ENVIRONS AUGUST 19 WAS ONLY PARTIALLY SUCCESSFUL AND HIGH-LIGHTED DIVISION IN LABOR MOVEMENT. ULTRA-LEFT GROUPS HAVE
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SCHEDULED A DEMONSTRATION IN LISBON AUGUST 20 IN SUPPORT OF THE

"COPCON DOCUMENT." THE PCP AND MDP/CDE HAVE RELUCTANTLY URGED THEIR MEMBERS TO SUPPORT THE DEMONSTRATION. THE PCP, IN A WEAK EFFORT TO RECAPTURE SOME OF THE LOST INITIATIVE, HAS ANNOUNCED A RALLY IN EVORA FOR AUGUST 24. END SUMMARY.

1. COSTA GOMES MEETS WITH PARTY REPRESENTATIVES: AS HE TOLD THE AMBASSADOR HE WOULD, PRESIDENT COSTA GOMES IS CONTINUING HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH PARTY LEADERS SEEKING A WAY OUT OF THE CURRENT POLITICAL CRISIS (REFTEL). ON AUGUST 19 HE MET WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE LEFT SOCIALIST MOVEMENT (MES) AND THE POPULAR DEMOCRAT (PPD). THE PRESIDENT HAS ALREADY MET WITH SOARES AND CUNHAL.

2. CORVACHO IS OUT: LEFT-LEANING BRIG. EURICO CORVACHO WAS REPLACED AS COMMANDER OF THE NORTHERN MILITARY REGION ON AUGUST 19. BRIG. AGOSTINHO FERREIRA, WHOSE MOST RECENT ASSIGNMENT WAS G-2/G-3 OF ARMY STAFF AND IS WELL AND FAVORABLY KNOWN TO ARMA HAS BEEN NAMED AS CORVACHO'S "INTERIM REPLACEMENT." THE SHIFT WAS ACCOMPANIED BY A FACE-SAVING ANNOUNCEMENT DESCRIBING THE CHANGE AS TEMPORARY PENDING THE OUTCOME OF AN INQUIRY, REQUESTED BY CORVACHO, OF THE CONDUCT OF HIS COMMAND. SOME ELEMENTS OF CORVACHO'S FORMER COMMAND--MOSTLY HEADQUARTERS PERSONNEL, AND A DECIDED MINORITY OF THE OVERALL COMMAND--HAVE PROTESTED AGAINST CORVACHO'S DEPARTURE.

3. OPORTO DEMONSTRATION "POSTPONED": THE PCP REGIONAL DIRECTORATE FOR THE NORTH (DORN) "POSTPONED" THE RALLY IT HAD SCHEDULED IN OPORTO AUGUST 19 TO PROTEST THE CONTINUING WAVE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST THE LEFT. THE DORN ANNOUNCEMENT CAME ONLY HOURS BEFORE THE RALLY WAS TO HAVE BEGUN. THE REASON GIVEN FOR THE ACTION WAS THAT, IN CURRENT UNSETTLED CIRCUMSTANCES, HOLDING THE RALLY COULD "OPEN THE WAY FOR MASSIVE PROVOCATIONS BY REACTIONARY POLITICO-MILITARY FORCES." THE STATEMENT, WHICH WAS MADE BEFORE THE REPLACEMENT OF BRIG. CORVACHO, ALSO DEFENDED CORVACHO AND ATTACKED THOSE WHO SOUGHT HIS DISMISSAL.

4. RENEWED VIOLENCE IN AZORES: PONTA DELGADA OFFICES OF THE MDP/CDE AND THE MES WERE SACKED AND THOSE OF THE PCP BURNED BY A CROWD OF OVER 1,000 DURING THE NIGHT OF AUGUST 19. FOLLOWING INCIDENTS, SEVERAL COMMUNIST LEADERS WERE FLOWN
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TO LISBON BY ORDER OF THE MILITARY GOVERNOR OF THE AZORES, PENDING A STABILIZATION OF THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN PONTA DELGADA. PCP OFFICES ARE NOW OCCUPIED BY MILITARY PERSONNEL. (COMMENT: THOUGH THEIR INFLUENCE HAS DIMINISHED RECENTLY, THE AZOREAN LEFTIST PARTIES HAVE IN THE PAST CONSTITUTED THE ONLY CIVILIAN POLITICAL COUNTERWEIGHT TO SEPARATISM IN THE ARCHIPELAGO. WITH THE DESTRUCTION OF THEIR FACILITIES IN ANGRA DE HEROISMO AND PONTA DELGADA AND THE EVACUATION OF COMMUNIST

LEADERS, THEY APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN ELIMINATED AS ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS ON THE AZOREAN POLITICAL SCENE, LEAVING THE STAGE TO SEPARATISTS AND PORTUGUESE MILITARY STATIONED THERE.)

5. INTERSINDICAL STRIKE HIGHLIGHTS DIVISIONS IN LABOR MOVEMENT: THE MIXED RESPONSE TO THE HALF-HOUR WORK STOPPAGE CALLED BY INTERSINDICAL AUGUST 19 EMPHASIZED THE INCREASING DIVISIONS OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT ALONG POLITICAL LINES. EMBASSY CHECKS REVEALED THE STRIKE TO BE ABOUT 25 PERCENT EFFECTIVE IN THE LISBON AREA. THERE WERE GREAT VARIATIONS IN SUPPORT WITH HIGHEST DEGREE IN LISBON'S INDUSTRIAL AREA AND ONLY ISOLATED INSTANCES OF STOPPAGES OUTSIDE THE LISBON/SETUBAL REGION. THE SOCIALIST PARTY OPPOSED THE STRIKE AND MARIO SOARES HAS PRIVATELY EXPRESSED HIS SATISFACTION AT WHAT HE TERMED ITS "FAILURE." THE MRPP ALSO OPPOSED THE STRIKE CALL, TERMING IT "A DESPERATE REACTIONARY MOVE BY SOCIAL-FASCISTS."

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6. MORE DEMONSTRATIONS: ADDITIONAL DEMONSTRATIONS HAVE BEEN

ANNOUNCED:

-- IN LISBON, ON AUGUST 20, A COLLECTION OF NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCILS AND WORKERS' COMMISSIONS HAS CALLED A DEMONSTRATION IN SUPPORT OF THE AUGUST 13 COPCON "SELF-CRITICISM" DOCUMENT. A NUMBER OF ULTRA-LEFT ORGANIZATIONS, INCLUDING UDP, LUAR, LCI, MES, FSP, AND THE NATIONAL SECRETARIAT OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCILS OF WORKERS, SOLDIERS, AND SAILORS (CRT'S) HAVE ANNOUNCED THEY WILL SUPPORT THE DEMONSTRATION. THE COMMUNISTS AND THE FELLOW-TRAVELLING MDP-CDE, HAVE STATED RESERVATIONS ABOUT SOME OF THE DEMONSTRATION THEMES, BUT HAVE URGED THEIR MEMBERS TO SUPPORT THE DEMONSTRATION. INTERSINDICAL HAS ALSO ANNOUNCED ITS SUPPORT. --IN EVORA, THE PCP REGIONAL DIRECTORATE FOR THE ALENTEJO AND THE ALGARVE HAS ANNOUNCED A "UNITARY" DEMONSTRATION FOR AUGUST 24, WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF MEMBERS OF THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE OF THE PCP AND THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL.

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7. COMMENT: THE SACKING OF CORVACHO AND THE "POSTPONEMENT" OF THE OPORTO DEMONSTRATION REPRESENT ADDITIONAL SETBACKS TO THE COMMUNISTS WHO FIND THEMSELVES MORE AND MORE IN THE POSITION OF REACTING TO EVENTS. THE PCP'S RELUCTANT SUPPORT OF TONIGHT'S "UNITY" DEMONSTRATIONS SPONSORED BY THE ULTRA-LEFT IS FURTHER INDICATION OF THE DEFENSIVE POSTURE IN WHICH THE PCP NOW FINDS ITSELF. RECENT EFFORTS TO RECAPTURE THE INITIATIVE, E.G. THE INTERSINDICAL WORK STOPPAGE, THE OPORTO DEMONSTRATION, HAVE FIZZLED. THE SCHEDULED DEMONSTRATION IN EVORA, WHERE THE PCP HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN STRONG, WILL HELP TO RESTORE SOME CONFIDENCE AMONG THE PARTY FAITHFUL BUT, EVEN WITH A LARGE TURNOUT, WILL NOT REVERSE THE BUILDING ANTI-PCP MOMENTUM. IT WOULD BE PREMATURE TO COUNT THE COMMUNISTS OUT AT THIS POINT HOWEVER. THEY STILL HAVE SIGNIFICANT ASSETS--A SKILLED LEADERSHIP, DEDICATED CADRES, MEMBERS IN POSITIONS OF AUTHORITY WITHIN THE BUREAUCRACY; AND GONCALVES IS STILL PRIME MINISTER. CARLUCCI

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